



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAN DIEGO COUNTY BIRD TESTS POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS *Increased Surveillance Activities Pay Off With Early Detection Of Virus*

County Environmental Health officials announced today that West Nile virus has reached San Diego County. The virus was confirmed in a dead bird found near a home in the El Cajon area earlier this month.

"We have mobilized our staff into the area to treat known mosquito breeding sites. We need help from the public to inform us on other possible breeding sites including unused backyard swimming pools, ponds and creeks," said Gary Erbeck, director of the Department of Environmental Health.

Erbeck urged residents to check their property for standing water sources including plant saucers, old tires, rain collection barrels, uncovered boats, and children's toys, noting that mosquitoes can breed in as little as a tablespoon of water. Residents can report dead birds or mosquito breeding areas at (858) 694-2888.

West Nile virus is primarily a bird disease. Mosquitoes that feed on infected birds become carriers and can pass the virus to humans, horses or other hosts when they bite. Other animal species are also at risk for contracting West Nile virus including horses, ostriches and emus. If you are concerned about the health of pet or farm birds, contact your veterinarian.

Most people infected with West Nile Virus have no symptoms although a few will develop fever, skin rashes, headaches and body aches. People most at risk to develop more serious illnesses are infants, people over 50 years of age and individuals with compromised immune systems.

County residents can protect themselves by wearing long sleeves and pants when outdoors, and staying indoors when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and dusk. Also, they should use an insect repellent containing DEET; keep screens on doors and windows and be sure they are in good repair; and eliminate standing water on their property. For more information about the West Nile Virus, call the County's West Nile virus information line at 1-888-551-INFO (4636) or visit the official County West Nile virus Web site at www.SDFighttheBite.com.

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